absent from the country.[1] Yet English, literature of that glorious period was profoundly imbued with the influence of individual Jews, or persons of Jewish blood.

It is, of course, absurd to overlook the Bible in this connexion. Shakespeare did not read and speak, as does the Englishman of to-day, an English saturated with Biblical language: he belonged to only the second generation to whom the Bible in English was readily accessible. But, nevertheless, a recent enquiry has demonstrated the great use which he made of the Scriptures. His Biblical knowledge was, moreover, the fruit of deep love and study, growing more and more with the passage of years. He had his favourite books—Genesis, Job, Proverbs, Isaiah, in the Old Testament, as well as Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha and St. Matthew in the New—echoes of which may be discovered in his own magnificent lines. Deprive him of his Biblical—i.e., his Semitic—background, and the Shakespeare we know would not be quite the same.

But it is more significant to discover in Shakespeare Hebraic influences nearer by far to his own day. Mention has been made above (p. 49) of the eleventh-century Spanish convert Petrus Alphonsi of Toledo, whose *Training School for the Clergy* contains all manner of entertaining fables for homiletic use. These passed into the common heritage of all Europe, a number being incorporated in the famous mediaeval collection, *Gesta Roman-*

orum. Some are printed at the end of Caxton's English *Aesop* of 1483, being thus among the earliest products of the English printing press. More noteworthy still, the collection was the source of many of Chaucer's stories. It was first printed in English by Wynkyn de Worde,

*It is possible to go back even further: Geoffrey Chaucer's Treatist on the Astrolabe (one of the earliest uses of English for scientific purposes) is based upon a Latin version of the Arabic treatise on the instrument, written by the Jewish scholar Mashaala about the year 800.